

Message Text

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CAPE TOWN ALSO FOR EMBASSY

EO 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT, SF (TRANSKIE)
SUBJ: SIGNIFICANT OPPOSITION TO MATANZIMA BEGINS TO COALESCE

REF: DURBAN A01

1. SUMMARY: SIX MEMBERS OF THE TRANSKEI ASSEMBLY, ALL PONDOS, HAVE FORMALLY BROKEN WITH THE TRANSKEI NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE PARTY (TNIP) AND FORMED THE NUCLEUS OF WHAT INFORMED OBSERVERS BELIEVE COULD GROW INTO A SIGNIFICANT OPPOSITION FORCE TO PRIME MINISTER KAISER MATANZIMA AND THE TNIP. FIVE OF THE SIX WHO CROSSED THE FLOOR TO THE OPPOSITION ARE CHIEFS AND FOUR ARE DIRECTLY RELATED TO TRANSKEI PARAMOUNT CHIEF BOTHA SIGCAU. THE PROXIMATE CAUSE OF THE SPLIT APPEARS TO BE PONDO DISPLEASURE OVER THE SACKING OF MISS STELLA SIGCAU, THE PRESIDENT'S DAUGHTER WHO WAS INTERIOR MINISTER UNTIL FORCED TO RESIGN BY MATANZIMA LAST DECEMBER BECAUSE OF A RELATIONSHIP SHE WAS HAVING WITH A MARRIED CHIEF. THE OBSERVERS BELIEVE THE INTELLIGENT AND

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WELL-REGARDED MISS SIGCAU IS THE FORCE BEHIND THE BREAK AND THAT OTHER IMPORTANT DEFECTIONS, PERHAPS INCLUDING THE RESIGNATION OF THE PRESIDENT, COULD FOLLOW. HOWEVER, NEITHER THEY NOR WE SEE THESE DEFECTIONS IMMEDIATELY AFFECTING MATANZIMA'S OVERWHELMING MAJORITY IN THE ASSEMBLY. END SUMMARY.

2. THE FIRST SIGNIFICANT DEFECTIONS FROM THE OVERWHELMING

TNIP MAJORITY IN THE TRANSKEI ASSEMBLY OCCURRED MARCH 20 WHEN SIX PONDO LEADERS FORMALLY ANNOUNCED THEIR RESIGNATION FROM THE TNIP AND CROSSED THE ASSEMBLY FLOOR TO SIT WITH THE OPPOSITION. FOUR OF THE SIX ARE MEMBERS OF THE SIGCAU CLAN, TRADITIONALLY THE MOST POWERFUL FAMILY AMONG THE PONDOS, AND ARE RELATED TO THE PRESIDENT OF TRANSKEI, PARAMOUNT CHIEF BOTHA SIGCAU. THE MOST PROMINENT AMONG THE DEFECTORS IS MISS STELLA SIGCAU, THE PRESIDENT'S DAUGHTER, FORCED TO RESIGN AS INTERIOR MINISTER BY PRIME MINISTER MATANZIMA IN LATE 1977 BECAUSE SHE HAD AN AFFAIR WITH TRANSKEI'S ROVING AMBASSADOR, CHIEF JEREMIAH MOSHESH, WHICH RESULTED IN HER HAVING A CHILD WHILE UNMARRIED. (REFAIR). THE FIERCELY PROUD AND GENERALLY UNRULY PONDOS APPARENTLY CONSIDERED THIS AS ANOTHER INSULT BY MATANZIMA AND FOR SEVERAL MONTHS WE HAVE BEEN AWARE OF RUMORS THAT SOME DRAMATIC POLITICAL RESPONSE WAS FORTHCOMING.

3. ACCORDING TO TWO WHITE SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNALISTS BASED IN UMTATA, THIS ACTION IS THE OPENING WEDGE IN WHAT THE DEFECTORS HOPE WILL BE A GROWING SPLIT IN THE TNIP AND COULD THREATEN MATANZIMA'S CONTROL. THERE ARE 27 EASTERN PONDOS IN THE ASSEMBLY, SOME APPOINTED CHIEFS AND SOME ELECTED, AND THE REPORTERS BELIEVE MANY WILL GRADUALLY FOLLOW THEIR CHIEFS INTO OPPOSITION. THEY ALSO BELIEVE THE PARAMOUNT CHIEF OF THE EASTERN PONDOS, PRESIDENT SIGCAU, SUPPORTS THE ACTIONS OF HIS DAUGHTER AND FELLOW CLANSMEN AND WILL JOIN THE OPPOSITION OR RESIGN. IN ADDITION, MATANZIMA RECENTLY FIRED MISS SIGCAU'S LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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REPUTED LOVER, CHIEF JEREMIAH MOSHESH, FROM HIS POSITION AS ROVING AMBASSADOR. THIS MEANS MOSHESH WILL BE ENTITLED TO RESUME HIS SEAT IN THE ASSEMBLY AND THE REPORTERS UNDERSTAND HE WILL IMMEDIATELY JOIN THE OPPOSITION AND COULD WELL INDUCE MANY OF HIS 12 FELLOW SOTHOS IN THE ASSEMBLY TO FOLLOW HIM. THERE IS ALSO A POSSIBILITY THAT SOME OF THE 18 WESTERN PONDOS IN THE ASSEMBLY, WHO OWE NO ALLEGIANCE TO THE SIGCAU CLAN BUT WHO ALSO CHAFE UNDER MATANZIMA'S RULE, COULD JOIN THE OPPOSITION AS WELL.

4. WHILE THE PROXIMATE CAUSE OF THE SPLIT WAS THE DECISION BY THE PURITANICAL MATANZIMA TO FORCE THE RESIGNATION OF MISS SIGCAU, THE PONDOS HAVE LONG HELD OTHER GRIEVANCES AGAINST MATANZIMA AND HE HAS FEARED THEIR GENERAL AGGRESSIVENESS AND INDEPENDENT NATURE. FOR EXAMPLE IN 1977 MATANZIMA INTRODUCED A REVENUE RAISING MEASURE LEVYING A R10 TAX ON EACH HEAD OF CATTLE. THIS WAS FIERCELY RESISTED BY THE PONDO CHIEFS, WHO FORCED MATANZIMA TO REDUCE THE LEVY TO R5, THEN R2.50 AND FINALLY A NOMINAL R1 PER HEAD, WHICH THE GOVERNMENT HAS REPORTEDLY NOT DARED TO COLLECT.

5. COMMENT: THE INCIPIENT PONDON BREAK-AWAY IS THE FIRST SIGNIFICANT CRACK IN THE TNIP MONOLITH WHICH HAS GOVERNED

TRANSKEI BASICALLY UNOPPOSED SINCE INDEPENDENCE. OF PARTICULAR SIGNIFICANCE IS THE PRESENCE OF MISS SIGCAU IN THE OPPOSITION, REPRESENTING THE FIRST TIME SINCE INDEPENDENCE THERE HAS BEEN AN ARTICULATE, INTELLIGENT AND POPULAR LEADER TO OPPOSE MATANZIMA IN THE ASSEMBLY. THIS SITUATION POSES AN UNDERLYING THREAT TO MATANZIMA'S RULE SINCE HE APPARENTLY FEARS THE PONDOS AND THEREFORE MAY BELIEVE HE CANNOT MOVE AS READILY TO ARREST ITS LEADERS AS HE WAS ABLE TO DO AGAINST THE POLITICALLY MORE IMPOTENT DEMOCRATIC PARTY LEADERSHIP. HOWEVER, IT IS UNLIKELY THE EASTERN PONDOS, EVEN AIDED BY THE WESTERN PONDOS AND THE SOTHOS, CAN MUSTER THE VOTES TO UNSEAT MATANZIMA. THE PRIME MINISTER'S REAL DANGER LIES IN THE POSSIBILITY OTHER LOCAL CHIEFS, MANY OF WHO REPORTEDLY HAVE GRIEVANCES AGAINST HIM, WILL SENSE KAISER'S CONTROL IS SLIPPING AND MOVE TO ASSERT THEIR OWN POWER.

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